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**Health Department Urges Better Hand Washing Practices After Two Outbreaks**

After an outbreak of salmonellosis left more than 150 people sick and a hepatitis A outbreak sickened three people, the Lake County Health Department/Community Health Center is urging food workers and residents to take extra care when hand washing.

The Health Department theorizes that the source of the salmonellosis outbreak in June was a food worker at Chili's Bar & Grill in Vernon Hills who was ill with the disease and failed to wash his or her hands properly after using the restroom. The source of the hepatitis A outbreak linked to Dover Straits is as of yet undetermined since it is unlikely that the ill restaurant employee is the source. Investigations remain ongoing.

"It's easy to put some soap on your hands, hold your hands under water for a few seconds and assume you've done a good job hand washing," said the Health Department's Executive Director Dale Galassie. "But in actuality, it's important to vigorously rub your

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hands with soap under running water for 20 seconds to eliminate bacteria.”

Good hand washing is the first line of defense against the spread of many illnesses, including the common cold, influenza, hepatitis A and food borne illnesses. Following are some simple steps for proper hand washing:

1. When washing your hands, use running water, if possible. Wash your hands in warm water, which assists in making the soap more effective.
2. Use soap and lather up for 20 seconds (antibacterial soap isn't necessary - any soap will do). Make sure you get “easy to forget” places like between the fingers. Don't forget the wrists. Use an individual nail brush to scrub the fingertips.
3. Rinse and dry well with a clean towel.

To minimize the germs passed around within families, make frequent hand washing a rule for everyone, especially:

- Before eating and preparing foods
- After using the bathroom
- After cleaning around the house
- After touching animals, including house pets
- After visiting or taking care of any sick friends or relatives
- After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After being outside (playing, gardening, walking the dog, etc.)

The Health Department, which conducts educational presentations for food workers at all local restaurants, is expanding its educational program to re-emphasize the importance of proper hand washing.

“Don't underestimate the power of hand washing,” said Galassie. “The 20 seconds you spend at the sink could very well save you a trip to the doctor's office.”